

## NOTES FROM THE COMPOSER

Caribbean Sweets is based on popular Afro-Caribbean rhythms using a 2-3 clave. Composed in three movements, it is written for an intermediate level string orchestra. The movements are all in first position.

The syncopation common to this style of music, is the rhythmic foundation for the different movements. Each movement correlates with a cultural dance and the syncopated rhythm stands out. The improvised sections use simple chords and is great for beginning improvisers.

Through this program, string students have the opportunity to become familiar with diverse styles of music. A fine introduction to ethnic bowing, the articulations allow students to practice and feel how to articulate Afro-Caribbean rhythms. Imitating the sound of the drum teaches a new rhythmic study for string instruments with a bow. Caribbean Sweets gives students the opportunity to practice rhythmic stability and develop off-beat syncopation accuracy within an ensemble. Syncopation is at the foundation of music from many different cultures.

Caribbean Sweets is written in a way that allows students to strengthen their fingers, develop accurate intonation in first position, and begin improvising. The Solo Sections have chords for students to learn beginning improvisation. Teachers can use some creative freedom with the background sections. When there are larger classes, many students can have a chance to play. Any of the solo sections can be repeated to accommodate this.

There are a multitude of ways to notate a rhythm. In studying rhythm both in formal conservatories and during a 50 year career of free-lancing in New York City within many different styles of ethnic music, I have observed that rhythm is not always notated in the tradition of European Classical music. Since the rhythm is repetitive, it is notated in a simpler way that expresses the number of notes played.

For example, in traditional Afro-Caribbean music, the rhythm is notated without ties. This depicts the number of notes being played and felt.



In the same Montuno figure, European music notation would notate this phrase using ties as such:



This happens in many places throughout all movements. I notated it the first time according to European traditions and subsequently notated it in accordance with Afro-Caribbean notation.

CARIBE has an eight bar solo section that uses simple I-V7-I chord changes. It is composed in the style of Son Montuno which originated in Cuba.

LEMON MERENGUE is in the style of a Merengue, a popular dance typical of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Its up-tempo rhythm is reminiscent of West African High Life music and dance as well. It has a repetitive uptempo V7-I chord sequence for improvisation.

MI AMOR uses open and closed first position and introduces accidentals. It has a solo section that uses ii-V7-I sequences of chord changes for improvisation. It is composed in the style of a Cuban Bolero.

These songs I originally composed for my students in Junior High School and High School string ensembles that live in their ethnic communities in the greater NY and NJ areas. Adding these compositions gave them a sense of pride in music that is from their cultural background. Building a pedagogy around ethnic music allows any student looking to perform on strings to access a broader sense of rhythmic capabilities as a musician.



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